"India has noted with dismay that after six weeks of relative lull in violence the security situation has deteriorated sharply with two suicide bomb attacks, and incursions by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) against President Yasser Arafat's compound in Ramallah."

"We hope that all conerned parties would act decisively and in good faith to contain this renewed spiral of violance, with comes at a time when there are new initiatives by the international community, particularly the "Quartet", to re-start the negotiations towards peace and the establishment of an independent Palestine State."

(d) There is no change in the policy of the Government on the Palestine issue.

Designating India as Country of Particular Concern

272. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that for the first time India has been put on religious watchlist by the US administration and designated as Country of Particular Concern (CPC) in terms of the International Religious Freedom Act, 1998 (IRFA);

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the disabilities which a CPC under the IRFA is subjected to;

(d) whether the proposed step is likely to affect adversely Indo-US relation; and

(e) if so, the measures proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) No. India has not been put on any watchlist or designated as a "Country of Particular Concern" in terms of the International Religious Freedom Act, 1998.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) A country designated as a "Country of Particular Concern" can be subjected to a wide range of diplomatic and economic sanctions.

(d) and (e) Do not arise.